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The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The Environmental Situation in the I.R. Iran

The life of Iranians is at great risk because the three main elements of life are polluted: water[1], air and earth. Over the past three decades, the inefficiency of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran as regards sustainable development along with the recent economical sanctions imposed on Iran by Europe and the US have deprived the people of healthy breathing air and healthy drinking water. Not only have the warnings of environmental supporters and experts and civil protests left no impact on the ongoing destruction but they have also led to environmental activists being threatened and arrested. Protesting against the desiccation of Urumiyeh Lake, the second largest salt lake in the world, many citizens were arrested and sent to Tabriz prison.

Air Pollution

Air pollution in Tehran and other big cities and industrial cities of the country is caused by development without environmental consideration and by non-standard production methods. Especially after the economical sanctions against Iran and the local production of petrol the air of the big cities became extremely polluted and causes the death of human beings.

According to Rahmatollah Hafezi, the head of the health commission of the city of Tehran speaking in October 2013, at least 277 air-pollution related deaths are reported each month.
In recent years, the existence of small particles in the air of many places in Iran has also put the population's health at risk.

Air pollution results from the existence of fine particles, caused partly by the local mismanagement of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and partly by the problems of Iran's neighbouring countries. The desiccation of a large part of the Hur al-Azim marshes is among the major factors contributing to the emergence of haze in the South and South-West of Iran. For the second time, the city of Ahvaz has this year been elected as the most polluted city in the world. Pollution has reached such an extent that it has led to protests of regional representatives.
In November 2013, the MP of Andimeshk referred in the Iranian parliament to the fact that the hazes are polluted with traces of uranium and chemical substances left over from the US-Iraq and Iran-Iraq war. At a conference on environmental improvement, the head of the Environmental University confirmed that uranium traces may be present in samples from the provinces.

Another instance is the carcinogenic pollution caused by the lead industry of Zanjan, which, according to the experts of the Iran Cancer website, has caused a rise in cases of lung cancer around the geographical area of this factory.
According to the official website of the Educational Base of Medicine and Food, quoting a WHO senior consultant, arsenic, mercury, lead and cadmium have been detected in mother's milk that was exposed to polluted air in Isfahan.

Animals Unique to Iran on the Brink of Extinction

The Persian leopard (*Panthera pardus saxicolor*) is one of the largest subspecies of the leopard, native to Western Asia. According to Shahram Amiri Sharifi, the head of Iran's Wildlife Observation Agency, "the leopard is a protected species but no precise statistics exist regarding their numbers and it seems that the species is rapidly becoming extinct. Numbers varying between 300 to 1000 collars have been reported in Iran." Still, according to the executive director of that Iranian Cheetah Society less than 70 cheetahs exist in Iran, whose main agents of extinction are human beings.
According to official statistics of the authorities, over the past six years 46 leopards perished in Iran, however, the head of Iran's Wildlife Observation Agency has said that the actual mortality rate is much higher.[2]
The Persian fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*) is a mammal from the deer family. According to scientific studies, around 45 Persian fallow deer died around the Karkheh river because a kind of fly had laid its eggs on their bodies and

[1] A/HRC/24/NGO/14 : http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/164/87/PDF/G1316487.pdf
http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/80982350/

only another 25 deer have been observed. The environmental authorities of Khuzestan province have tried to prevent their death by catching the deer alive and administering medical treatment to the sick animals. Nevertheless, a large number of deer have died.

The hunting of regular wild animals without license and some other cases are punishable by a cash fine of 100000 to 1000000 Rial[3] and a prison sentence from one to six months. According to some animal protection activists in Iran, the maximum fine may be adequate punishment for such illegal poaching, however, the minimum fine is not.
Seyyed Javid Al-e Davud, the head of the Society for the Protection of Animals is critical of the Environmental Society's approach to offenders. He says that in previous cases, Environment Office officials have blamed others, saying that such things happen. But why are no observation measures or a resolute approach to offenders adopted?[4]

Execution and Death of Iranian Gamekeepers

The death penalty is legal in Iran and the number of executions increases daily, despite the endeavours of Iranian civil and political activists. Caring gamekeepers, who occasionally resort to the use of weapons both to preserve the environment and prevent irregular and unlicensed hunting and to defend themselves when faced with poachers are executed. If they do not defend themselves, they are killed by armed poachers.
From the beginning of the Islamic Revolution until now, 113 gamekeepers have been killed in wildlife reserves.[5]
The most recent instance is the confirmation of the death sentence in early 2013 for Gholamhosein Khaledi, the second gamekeeper of the Dana region. The judges who sentence gamekeepers to death believe that "the gamekeepers are not executive officers of the public prosecutor, they cannot resort to the use of weapons." By contrary, Article 32 of the Executive Code of the Environmental Protection and Improvement Act expressly sets forth that gamekeepers are, with the consent of the Defence Ministry, permitted to use weapons.

Following the Suggestion of the Environmental Ministry or Merging with the Ministry of Agriculture

In spite of this regrettable situation, rather than expanding the Environmental Office and the Forestry and Pastures Office, some officials are intent on weakening the Environmental Ministry as much as possible und to merge it with the Forestry, Pastures and Watershed Management Office.
In December 2013, 63 MPs prepared a scheme for dissolving the Environmental Ministry and merging it with the Forestry, Pastures and Watershed Management Office. If this scheme is finally passed, these institutions will function under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture. Alireza Owrangi, the last head of the Forestry Office, stated during the previous government that this scheme was completely incompetent from a technical, executive and legal point of view. Khodakaram Jalali, the new head of the Forestry, Pastures and Watershed Management Office, has also pointed out that the Environmental Office has a supervisory, not an executive role, whereas the Forestry Office has an executive and judicial role. Thus, considering the different roles of these two institutions, their merger would be to the detriment of both.

Regarding its legal and institutional status, the Office for the Protection of the Environment in fact stands above the ministries, since the ministries have an executive status whereas the Environment Office has a supervisory role. For instance, the head of the Office for the Protection of the Environment is authorised to stop any construction and industrial project and any activity that he considers harmful to the environment.[6]
The lack of transparency of Iran's Environment Office and Forestry, Pastures and Watershed Management Office combined with the inefficiency of their respective officials when it comes to preventing the destruction of Iran's environment has certainly left a trace.

[3] 3.39 to 33.9 US$
[4] http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/372394/
[5] http://khabaronline.ir/detail/334224/society/environment
[6] http://www.iranhrc.org/?lan=fa&p=958

Environmental supporters and experts have offered the following suggestions to the relevant Iranian authorities as a way out of the environmental crisis in Iran. They also pursue them through the UN, for a sound environment is an important human right.

Recommendation:

1) International supervision regarding the indicators of sustainable development,

2) Evaluation of all construction plans for their environmental impact before they are implemented,

3) Environmental NGOs and activists should be allowed to discuss and supervise the implementation of governmental and private construction plans without being threatened with prison.

4) Regarding air pollution, measures that need to be taken include, on the one hand, the allocation of resources to implement the findings of scientific studies on fine particles and dust storms and, on the other hand, educational work to raise people's environmental awareness by way of mass media while providing the population with adequate safety measures and medical facilities.

5) The develop nent, advancement and optimisation of meteorological systems *in situ* and satellites to simulate dust progress and issue warnings. Also, the prediction of the effects of environmental phenomena related to dust storms and the elaboration of strategies to deal with these storms through collaboration with research centres and international institutions.